

TravelInfo

NIH's Quarterly Travel Management Center Information Provider

A Worksite Enrichment Programs Branch, DSS, ORS Production

<http://www.nih.gov/od/ors/dss/special/index.htm>

November 2001

Issue 7

Project Officer News

This supplementary issue of TravelInfo is dedicated to providing NIH travelers and travel arrangers with information that can be used to facilitate the entire travel request process. Our internal procedures coupled with the current security concerns can often be confusing and stressful, so our goal is to offer reminders and tips which will benefit all parties involved with a travel request.

Should you have any questions or comments on information provided, please email Ellen Grant at grante@mail.nih.gov.

Omega News

Omega is pleased to announce a new **NIH dedicated web site** www.nihtravel.com that offers new and improved on-line Travel Profile and Travel Request Forms. After receiving comments on the length and information requested on each form, Omega took the initiative to revamp and streamline both. The Project Office and Omega are confident that the NIH will find these more user friendly and less cumbersome.

We cannot stress enough the importance of completing an **on-line Travel Profile Form**. When completed, the form provides Omega with the traveler's preferences for airlines, airports,

meals, and most importantly full contact information. Industry-wide we are experiencing many last minute airline schedule changes, and Omega has a better chance of informing travelers expeditiously when provided with office, home and an alternate point of contact's phone numbers. The Project Office strongly encourages all staff to take a few minutes to complete and submit this essential information.

The **on-line Travel Request Form** is a timesaver for everyone. Frequently, travel arrangers submit an informal email to Omega for travel requests, but they neglect to include key information such as dates of travel. The on-line form prompts you with all the relevant questions for Omega, which allows them to respond to requests within the two-hour performance standard.

The Project Office and Omega have received many comments from staff pertaining to **faxes sent to the TMC**. The feedback indicated that staff was not confident that faxes had been received by Omega, and this resulted in several follow-up calls to make sure they were there. In response to this, effective October 17, Omega instituted a process that will ensure that each fax received will have a confirmation receipt faxed back to the consumer within two business hours of submission. We are confident that this will alleviate uncertainties previously experienced.

What You Can Do to Assist Omega

To ensure that your travel needs are effectively met, we would like to offer some procedures that will help all NIH travel arrangers:

- As soon as travel requirements are known, contact Omega for assistance. When possible it is more expedient to email or fax requests.
- Omega will either email or fax a copy of the requested itinerary. They will also provide the booking locator number, and this allows you to check the reservation online at www.viewtrip.com.
- Approved Travel Orders should be faxed to the TMC within 3 weeks prior to travel commencing- if known.
- Travel Orders should match the itinerary provided by the TMC (i.e., estimated costs, dates, times, locations).
- If a change has been made, an approved amended travel order must be forwarded to Omega. If the change was made after a ticket was issued, a second service fee should be included in the GTA field of the Travel Order.
- If a non-contract carrier has been requested, make sure that a proper justification is noted on the travel order. See Manual Chapter 1500-03-02, Exceptions to the Use of Government Contract Carriers, for additional guidance.
- For Premium Class Air Accommodations, ensure that the appropriate form is faxed with the travel order to Omega. See Manual Chapter 1500 Appendix 7 and Appendix 8 for forms.
- Make sure you tell the travel agent when, how and where tickets should be delivered/picked-up. For the NIH

Accountable Mail System, you must provide the contact name; building/room and mail stop code (MSC).

- For additional guidance and information on authorization and approval of government travel, please see NIH Manual Issuance 1500-01-00 through 1500-01-02. This information is available on line at <http://www1.od.nih.gov/oma/manualchapters>.

Estimated Ticket Costs for Travel Orders

There are times when an actual ticket cost exceeds the original estimate provided by the TMC. This is due to the fact that the estimates were provided prior to the General Services Administration (GSA) releasing the new contract fares for the current fiscal year. While we realize the price indicated on the travel order is an estimate, Omega can only issue tickets if the actual cost is within \$50 of the travel order.

Need Help? Invite Us Over!!

Prior to and during the TMC transition period in May, the Project Office carried out an aggressive educational campaign that focused on sharing details and contact information for our new TMC contract with Omega. We sponsored two large-scale general audience presentations, and we also went by invitation to several offices to address small groups. This was a fantastic opportunity for staff to meet NIH and Omega contacts, as well as ask questions and raise concerns.

As you can imagine, there have been many changes within the TMC contract and the entire travel industry. While newsletters and emails are one way to reach our audience, we would also like to let you know that we would welcome the opportunity to come to you personally! Please contact Ellen Grant at grante@mail.nih.gov to schedule a time and date convenient for you.

Travel Advisories

Our last issue provided web links that contained travel advisories for the General Services Administration, Federal Aviation Administration and the State Department. We are pleased to announce that these links are also now available on the WEPB Travel Page at <http://www.nih.gov/od/ors/dss/special/index.htm>

Continuing Resolution Update

There is no appropriation in place at this time, and the Federal Government is operating on a succession of Continuing Resolutions (CR). Currently, the NIH Office of Financial Management has allowed **fully refundable** tickets to be issued for travel starting on or before November 16.

Clarification to Project Officer News

This is to clarify the Project Officer News article published in Issue 6, October 2001. Once funding (either through a CR or appropriation) is in place, current NIH policy dictates that individually issued Government travel cards may **NOT** be used to procure common carrier transportation (i.e., airline or train tickets) unless an emergency situation or exigency exists. For more information please see NIH Manual Chapter 1130, Travel Number 12 or go to <http://www3.od.nih.gov/oma/manualchapters/delegations/travel/t12/>.

Let's Hear From You!!

Do you have a question or topic that you would like addressed in an upcoming issue of TravelInfo? Please send us your suggestions via email to Ellen Grant at grante@mail.nih.gov.